

Message Text

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT GW

SUBJ: CDU PLUSSES AND MINUSES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

REF: STUTTGART 1171

1. SUMMARY: KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG STILL CONSIDER OUTCOME OF BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS OCTOBER 3 VERY MUCH AN OPEN QUESTION. CURRENT WAVE OF CDU/CSU OPTIMISM MAY BE MORE WISHFUL THINKING THAN POLITICAL REALISM. TURNING POINT IN FINAL 2 1/2 WEEKS LIKELY TO BE MORE SOPHISTICATED PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CERTAIN KEY ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

2. OUTCOME OF OCTOBER 3 BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS STILL TOO CLOSE TO CALL IN EYES OF MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE LOCAL OBSERVERS. CDU/CSU STILL GIVEN OUTSIDE CHANCE BUT CURRENT CDU/CSU OPTIMISM NOT FULLY JUSTIFIED ON BASIS AVAILABLE EVIDENCE. ONE OF BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG'S MOST ABLE POLITICIANS (CDU LANDTAG FACTION

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CHAIRMAN LOTHAR SPAETH) INFORMED CONGEN OFFICERS SEPTEMBER

17 THAT CDU WOULD NEED TO GAIN AT LEAST 48 SEATS TO BE ABLE TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT. BASED ON HIS ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE CDU GAINS IN OTHER LAENDER, HE CAN COUNT ONLY HALF THIS AMOUNT AT THIS TIME.

3. SPAETH BELIEVED OPPOSITION WOULD HAVE TO AVERAGE AT LEAST FIVE PERCENT GAIN OVER 1972 BUNDESTAG ELECTION TO WIN POWER. ANTICIPATED 4-5 PERCENT GAINS IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND BAVARIA AND CERTAIN AINS IN LAENDER OTHER THAN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN AND SAARLAND WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO GIVE CDU/CSU THAT REQUIRED GAIN FOR ENTIRE FRG. REAL KEY AS IN PREVIOUS ELECTIONS WILL HAVE TO BE CDU BREAKTHROUGH IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA. BIEDENKOPF'S ATTACK ON UNIONS, SPAETH BELIEVED, IS BAD MOVE WHICH MAY BACKFIRE AGAINST CDU.

4. CDU, NEVERTHELESS, MORE MOBILIZED THAN EVER BEFORE AND IN THIS REGARD AT THE MOMENT HAS A CLEAR EDGE ON SPD AND FDP. "FREEDOM INSTEAD OF SOCIALISM" THEME HAS BASIC APPEAL ONLY TO HARD CORE CDU/CSU VOTERS AND CAN INCREASE OPPOSITION STRENGTH ONLY WHEN VOTERS PERCEIVE ISSUE AS ONE CONCERNING EXTENT THAT GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY INTERFERES IN THEIR DAILY LIVES.

5. KOHL'S CABINET CHOICES CAN ALSO WEAKEN OVERALL APPEAL OF CDU/CSU. THESE CHOICES DEFINITELY HAVE A STRONG CONSERVATIVE CAST AND REPRESENT POLITICAL COMPROMISES ON KOHL'S PART, AND FOR THIS REASON HE DELAYED AS LONG AS POSSIBLE BEFORE ANNOUNCING THEIR NAMES. SPAETH BELIEVES KOHL WOULD MAKE MANY CHANGES AFTER ESTABLISHING HIS CONTROL SHOULD CDU/CSU WIN ELECTION. IN MEANTIME CDU HOPING THAT VOTERS DON'T HAVE QUITE ENOUGH TIME TO LET IMPACT OF KOHL CABINET CHOICES SINK IN. THIS OBSERVATION CONFIRMS SIMILAR REMARK MADE TO CONGEN OFFICERS IN PRIVATE BY ALLENSBACH RESEARCHERS FEW DAYS EARLIER.

6. BELIEF IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG PERSISTS THAT FDP HAS FORMIDABLE CAMPAIGN ASSET IN CHARACTER AND ABILITY OF FDP MINISTERS IN BONN COALITION. CDU/CSU CAN'T GAIN MUCH ATTACHING THESE MEN DIRECTLY. SHORTCOMINGS IN THEIR PERFORMANCE MUST BE PUT SQUARELY AND CONVINCINGLY AT SPD DOORSTEP (FDP IN SPD KANGEROO POUCH) FOR CDU/CSU TO CUT APPRECIABLY INTO SPD/FDP MARGIN.

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7. SPAETH ALSO MADE INTERESTING OBSERVATION RE FOREIGN POLICY. HE AGREED THAT DIRECTION OF OVERALL FRG FOREIGN POLICY WOULD NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFER REGARDLESS OF WHICH PARTY HELD REINS OF POWER. BASIC DIFFERENCE WOULD BE THAT KOHL WOULD NOT MAKE ANY MAJOR MOVES PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO SOVIETS AND EASTERN EUROPE WITHOUT FIRST HE HAD US BLESSING.

COMMENT: MANY OF SPAETH'S OBSERVATIONS CONFIRM FROM SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE WHAT CONGEN OFFICERS HAVE HEARD FROM VARIETY OF OTHER SOURCES AS WELL AS MUCH OF WHAT HAS BEEN APPEARING RECENTLY IN LOCAL MEDIA. DESPITE FACT THAT ELECTION LESS THAN THREE WEEKS AWAY, OUTCOME STILL CAN EASILY TURN ON SLIGHT SHIFTS IN PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT REAL ISSUES ALLEGED TO BE WITH PERSONALITIES OF KEY FIGURES -- PRIMARILY SCHMIDT AND KOHL -- STILL PROVING TO BE ULTIMATE AND DECISIVE FACTORS. ON BALANCE, INFORMED LOCAL VIEW STILL SEEMS TO BE THAT CDU/CSU MUST MOVE UP A SMALL INCLINE TO OVERTAKE COALITION PARTNERS. JENKINS

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